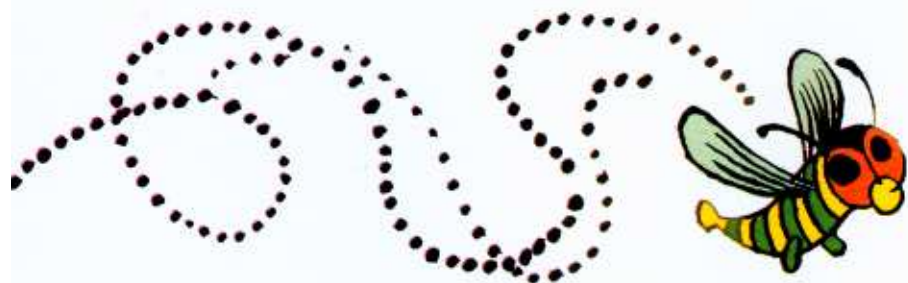


REENIE KAUR
TWO
FRIENDS

Illustrations
Anup Ray





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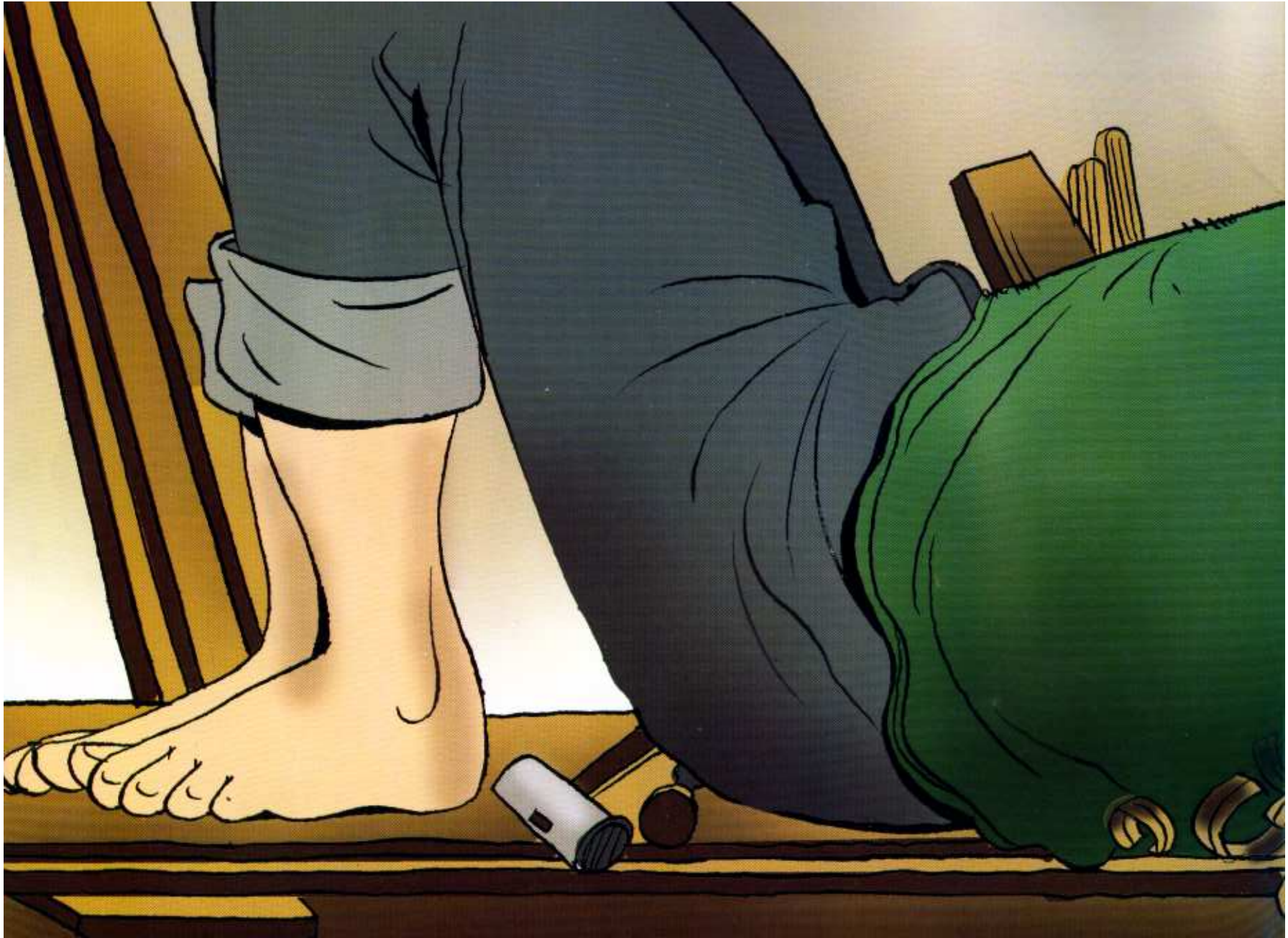
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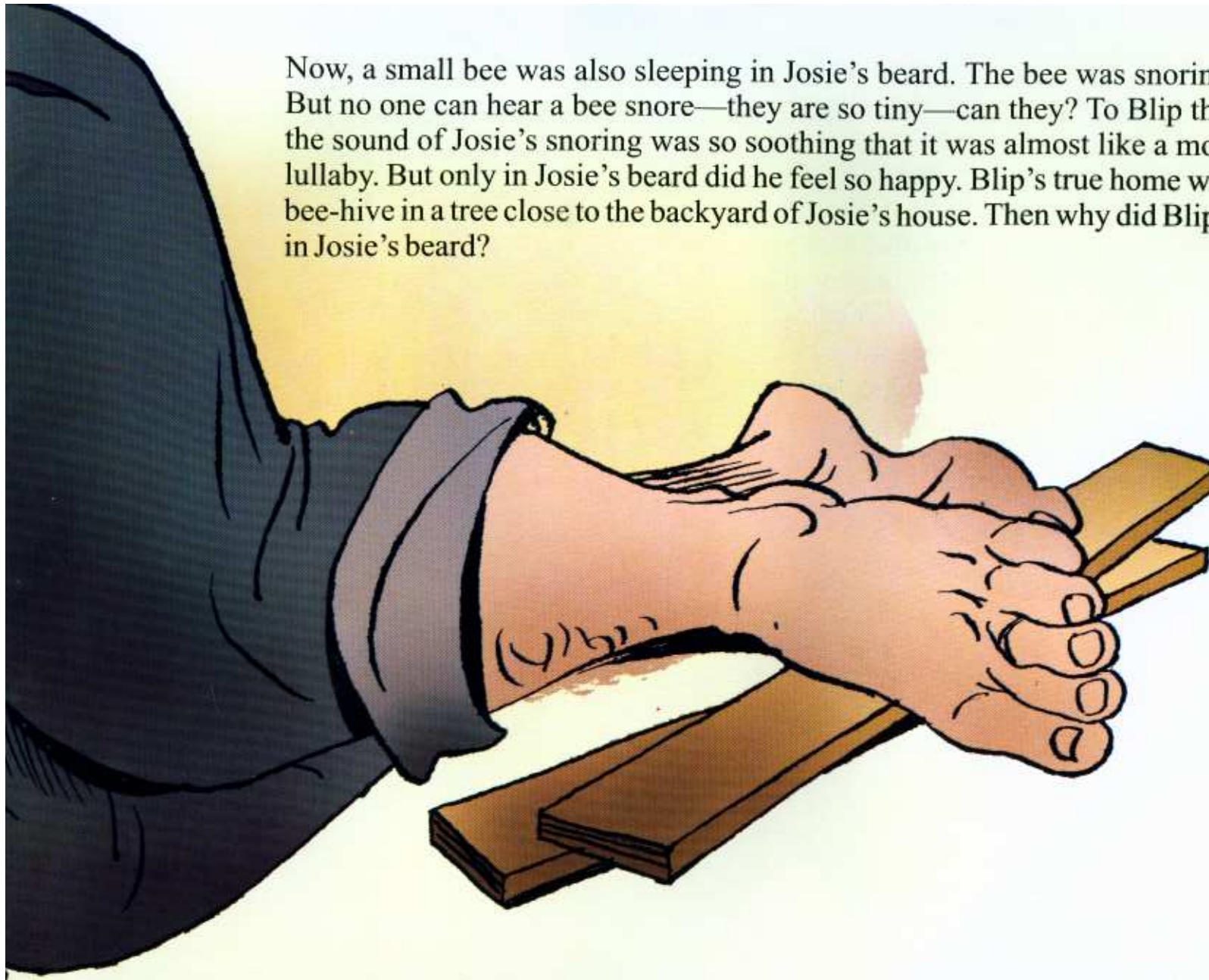


It was well beyond the lunch hour. Josie the carpenter was lying stretched out in the sun for a quick nap. All six foot two inches of him, on the long wooden table. His work station! Josie was a big man. He had a large face, which was covered by a thick black beard. His round red nose twitched each time a fly sat on his pink cheeks or forehead. Under his nose was a bristly black moustache and a pair of rosy lips. They fluttered from beneath, each time he snored!





Now, a small bee was also sleeping in Josie's beard. The bee was snoring too! But no one can hear a bee snore—they are so tiny—can they? To Blip the bee, the sound of Josie's snoring was so soothing that it was almost like a mother's lullaby. But only in Josie's beard did he feel so happy. Blip's true home was in a bee-hive in a tree close to the backyard of Josie's house. Then why did Blip sleep in Josie's beard?



Well, friendships start in many ways, and this one started thus. One day Blip was flying close to Josie's work-table. Whenever Josie lost his balance while working, two or three drops of his sweat rolled down to where Blip the bee was sitting. Now that seems a very little water, but for a bee, it can be too much. He struggled bravely trying to get out. But his wet wings clung together and it became difficult to move. He was losing breath, and was growing weak.



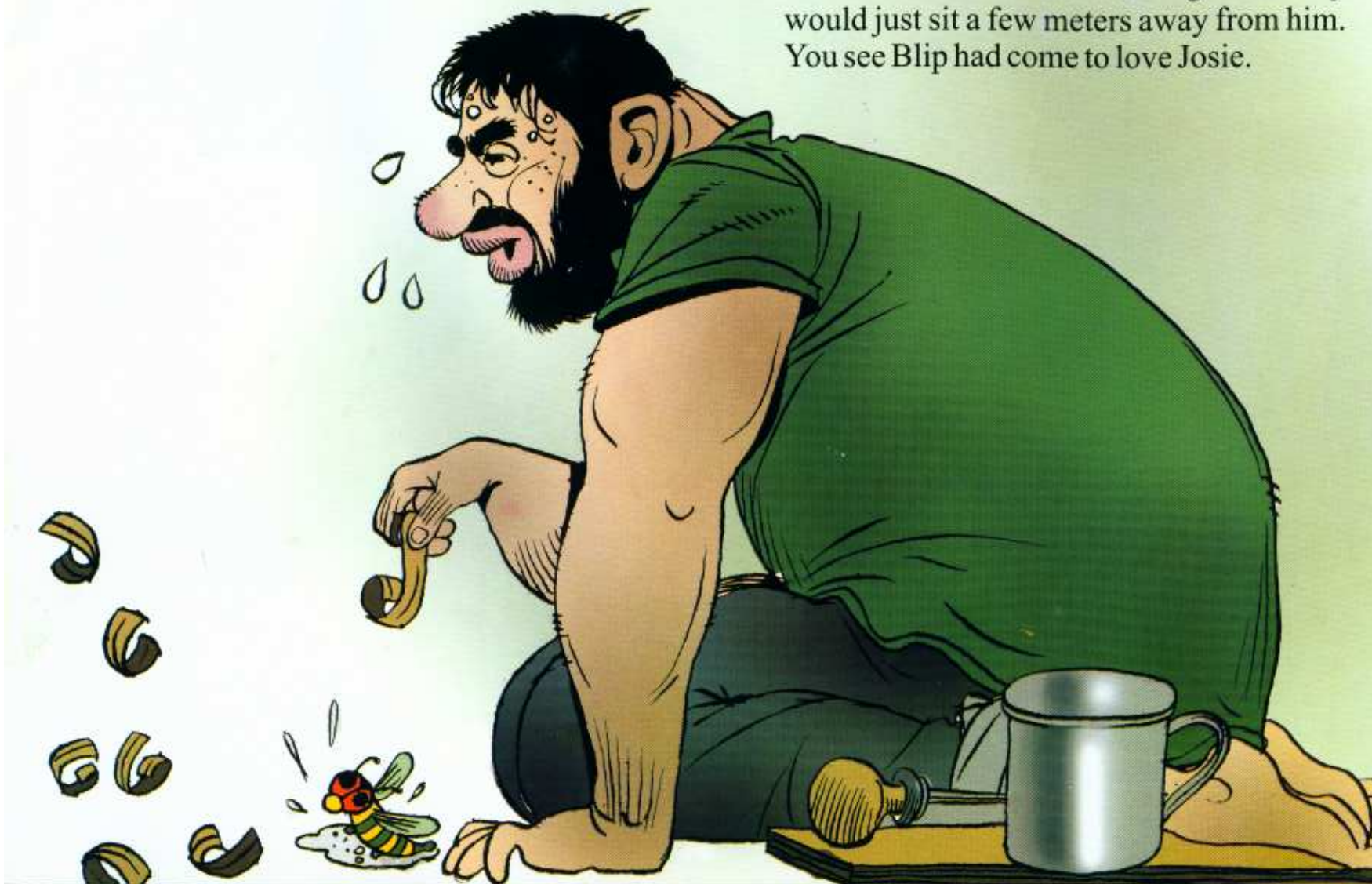




Suddenly Josie noticed him, "OOOOh! You need help, little fellow," he said. Quickly picking up a thin wooden shaving from the ground, he placed it under Blip and gently lifted him up. Then he put him on a log of wood some distance away. "There you are then," he said kindly. "Just dry up and you'll be fine." Josie went back to his work.



Blip never forgot this. And now at the end of each day, he would fly to the carpenter. Josie would still be working and Blip would just sit a few meters away from him. You see Blip had come to love Josie.







One day Josie noticed his presence. "Ah ha! Aren't you the same little fellow, whom I helped a few days ago? I'm glad to see you son, its quite lonesome here, since my family went away on a holiday." Josie had a wife, fifteen year old son and thirteen year old daughter.

Now Blip didn't understand what Josie said, but he could make out gentleness in his tone. So each day Blip came closer and closer, until one day he couldn't resist it anymore.




Josie's wonderful thick bushy beard seemed so inviting in cold weather! So he crawled inside. This tickled the big man initially and at first he giggled. Then he let out a loud gauffe and pulling out his pocket comb, he gently ran it through his beard. Out came a very guilty looking Blip. "Oh alright then, if that pleases you, go ahead, but see that you don't sting me, when I scratch my beard," Josie smiled. Blip nestled into his beard once again; and both of them went to sleep for the night. Blip's tiny body swaying to Josie's gentle snores.





All day Blip flew from
bee-hive to flower and
back again, again, again,
again, again, and again . . .

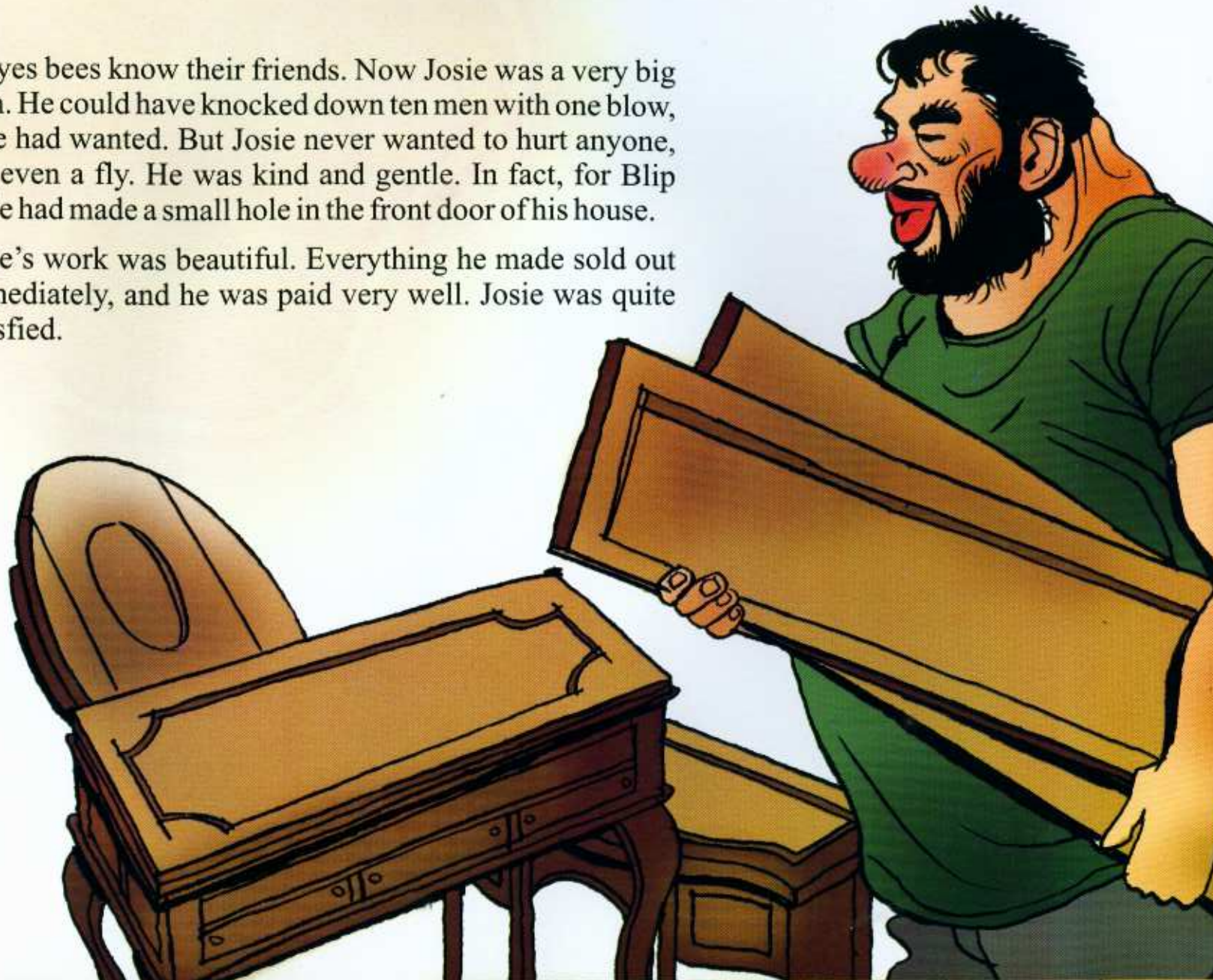
A man with a dark beard and mustache, wearing a green t-shirt, is shown from the side, looking down at a cluster of flowers. His hand is reaching towards the flowers. The flowers include red tulips and yellow daisies. A bee is visible on one of the flowers.

till the sun began to go down in the sky. Did he ever get tired?

From pollen the bees made delicious honey. But after all this work of theirs, men came all muffled up against bee stings to steal honey. Breaking their painfully built home, and killing the bees! But big Josie never let any one touch the tree with the hive in it. And for this the bees loved him.

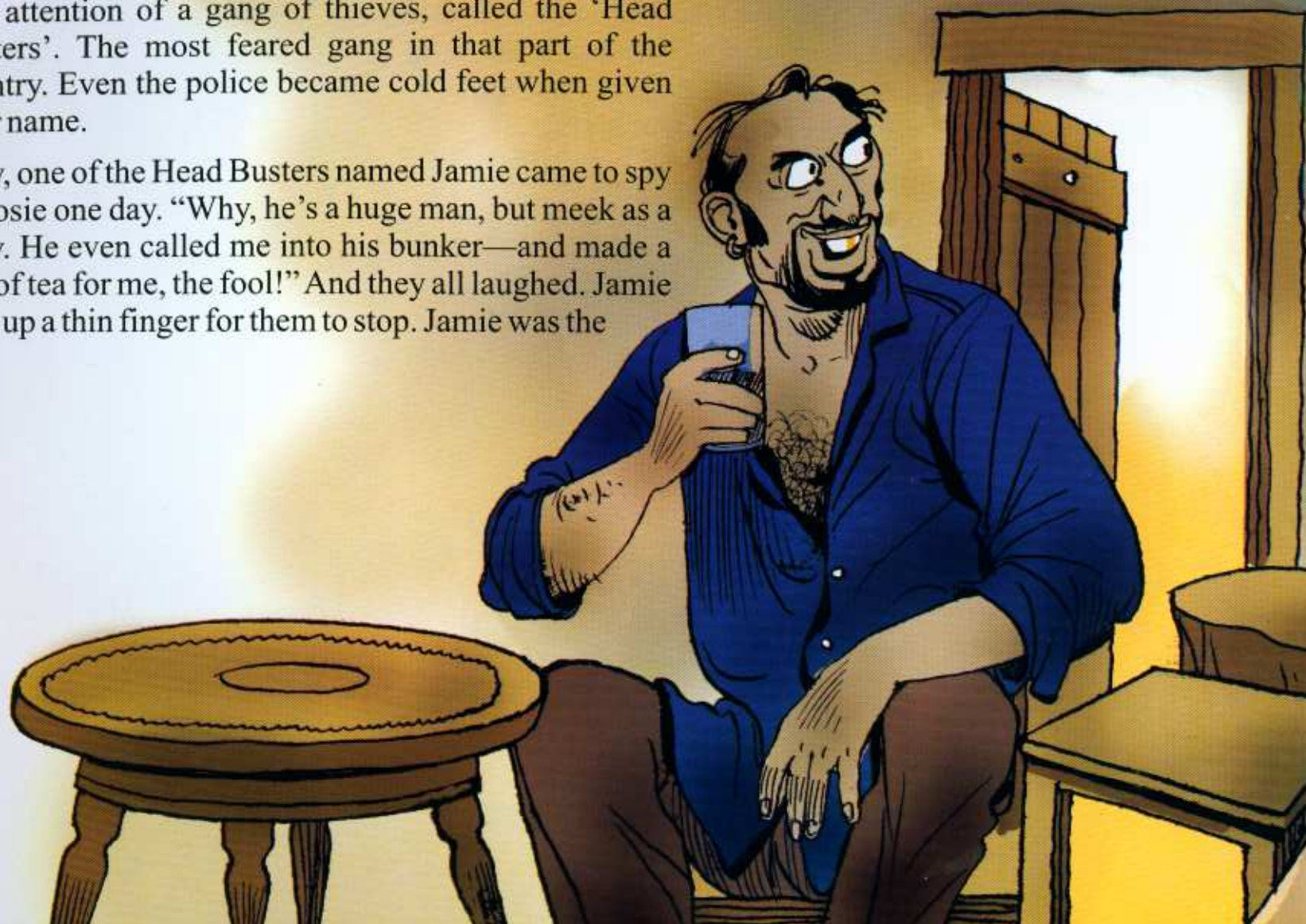
Oh yes bees know their friends. Now Josie was a very big man. He could have knocked down ten men with one blow, if he had wanted. But Josie never wanted to hurt anyone, not even a fly. He was kind and gentle. In fact, for Blip Josie had made a small hole in the front door of his house.

Josie's work was beautiful. Everything he made sold out immediately, and he was paid very well. Josie was quite satisfied.

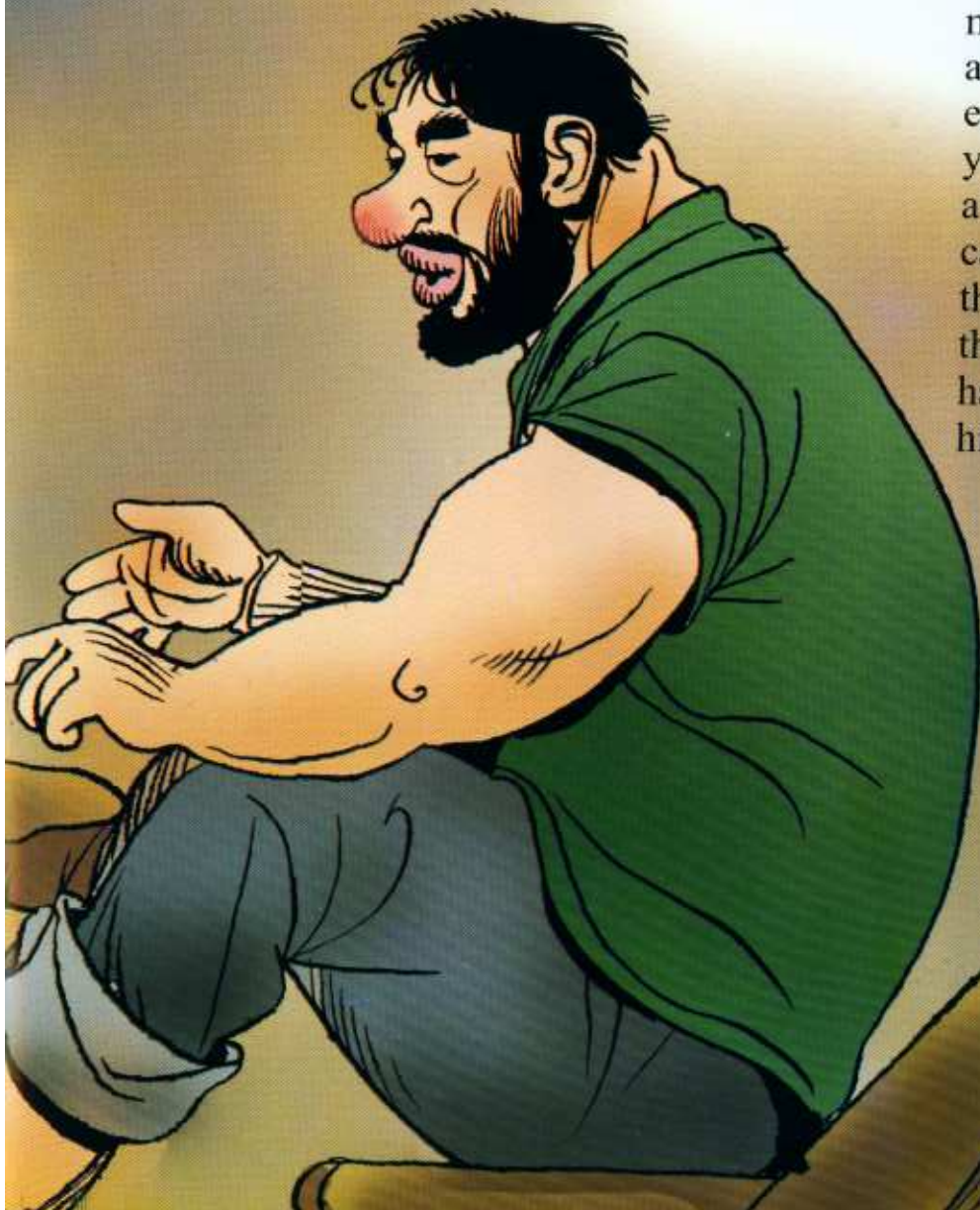


But Josie's success attracted another type of attention. The attention of a gang of thieves, called the 'Head Busters'. The most feared gang in that part of the country. Even the police became cold feet when given their name.

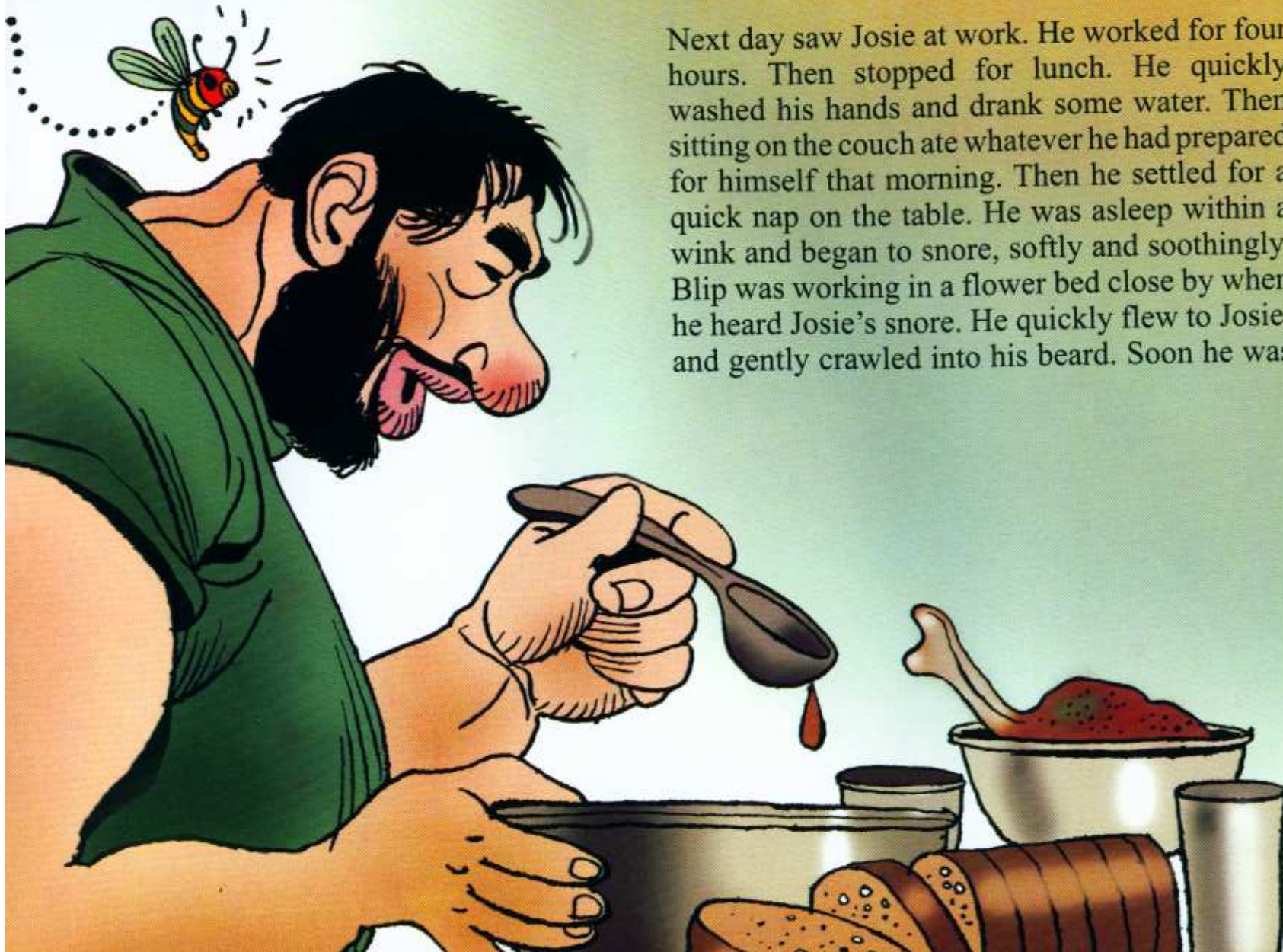
Now, one of the Head Busters named Jamie came to spy on Josie one day. "Why, he's a huge man, but meek as a baby. He even called me into his bunker—and made a cup of tea for me, the fool!" And they all laughed. Jamie held up a thin finger for them to stop. Jamie was the



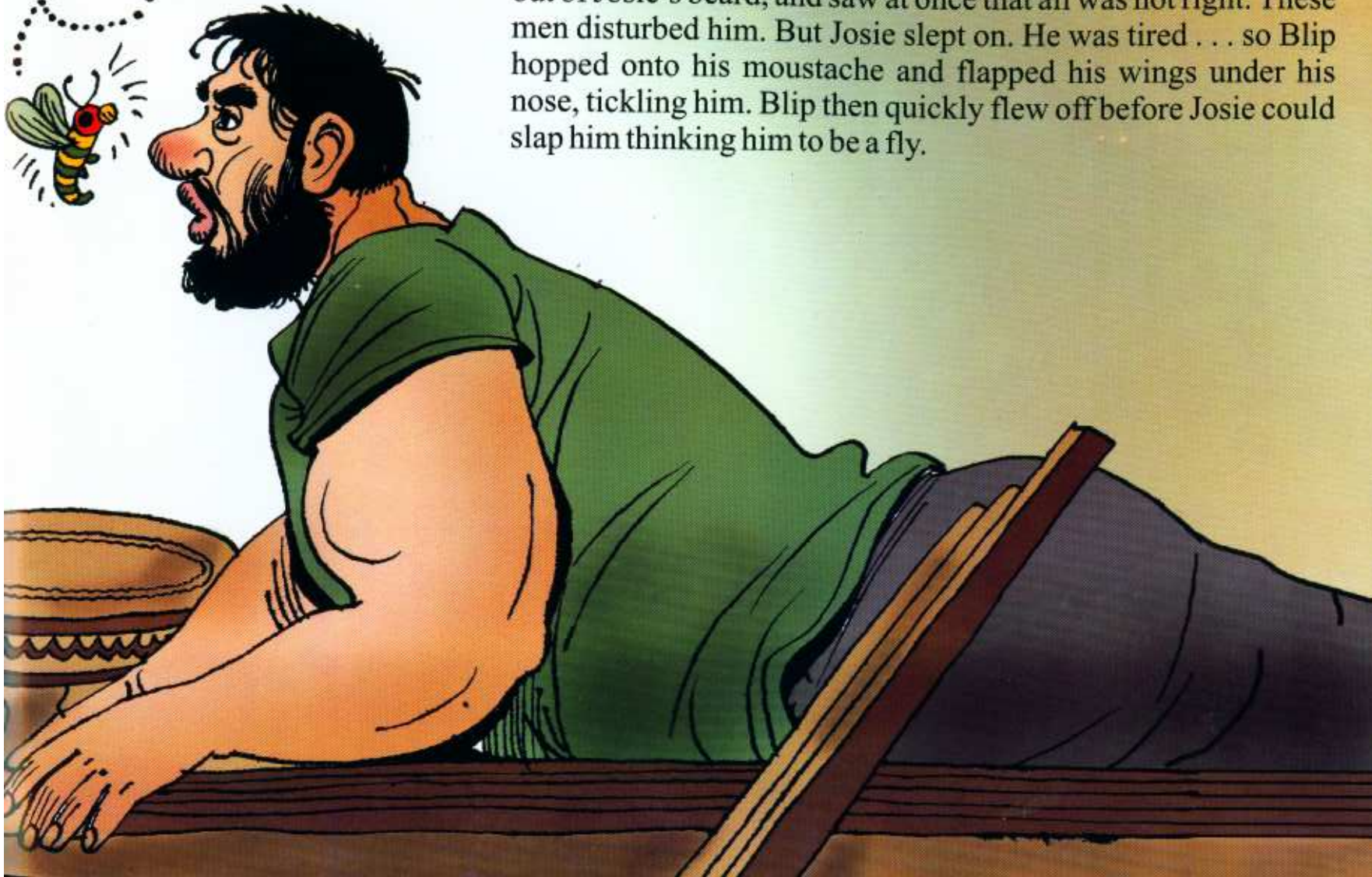
meanest of them all. His big eyes were slits and his nose a hook. As he talked, his large ear-rings shook. He raised his arms and yelled, "Then tomorrow. Tomorrow afternoon we reach there. That fool carpenter will be no problem. Have you got the four carts repaired and ready?" One of them nodded. "Let those horses rest well, we have very far to go." Jamie smiled to himself—showing one gold tooth.



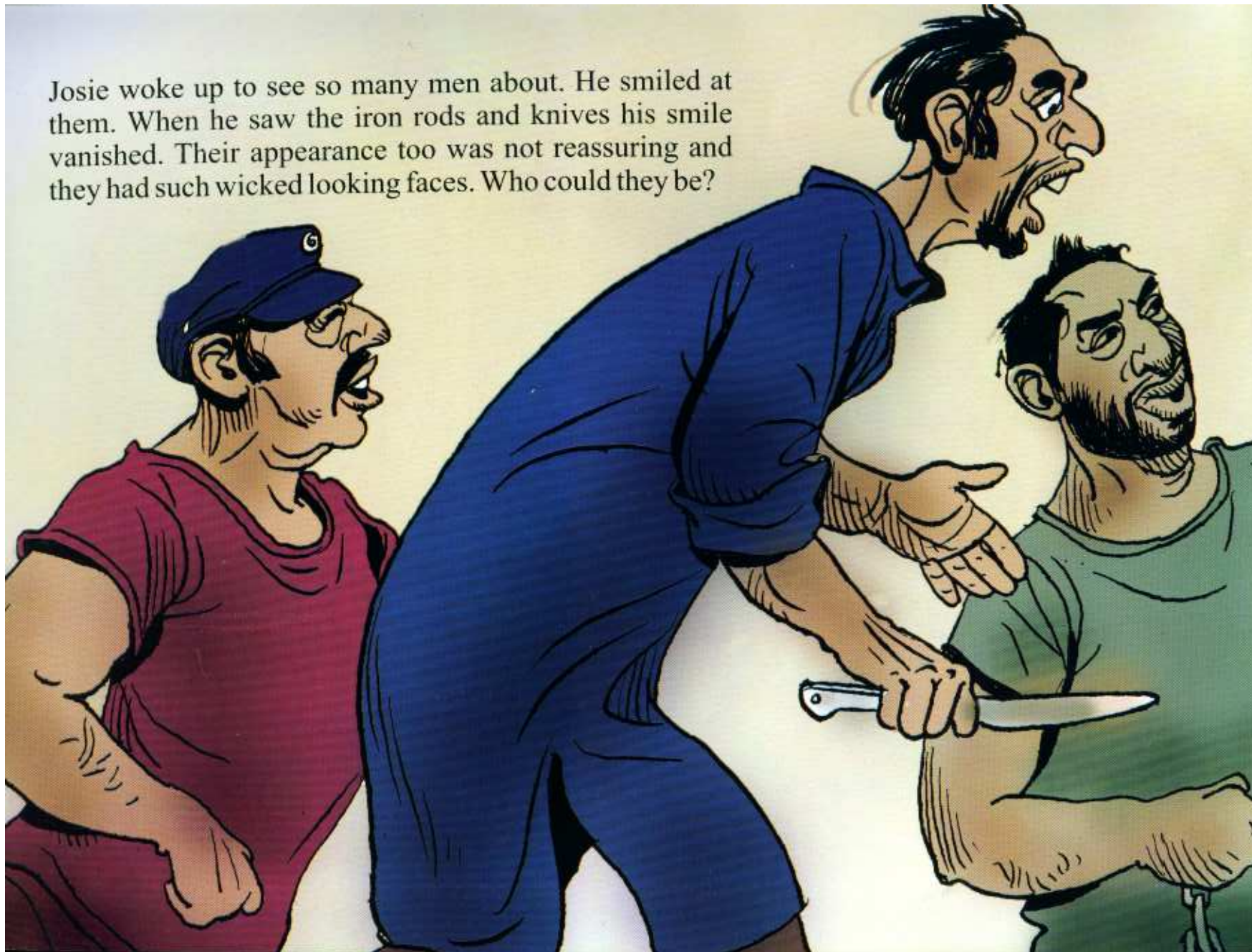
Next day saw Josie at work. He worked for four hours. Then stopped for lunch. He quickly washed his hands and drank some water. Then sitting on the couch ate whatever he had prepared for himself that morning. Then he settled for a quick nap on the table. He was asleep within a wink and began to snore, softly and soothingly. Blip was working in a flower bed close by when he heard Josie's snore. He quickly flew to Josie, and gently crawled into his beard. Soon he was

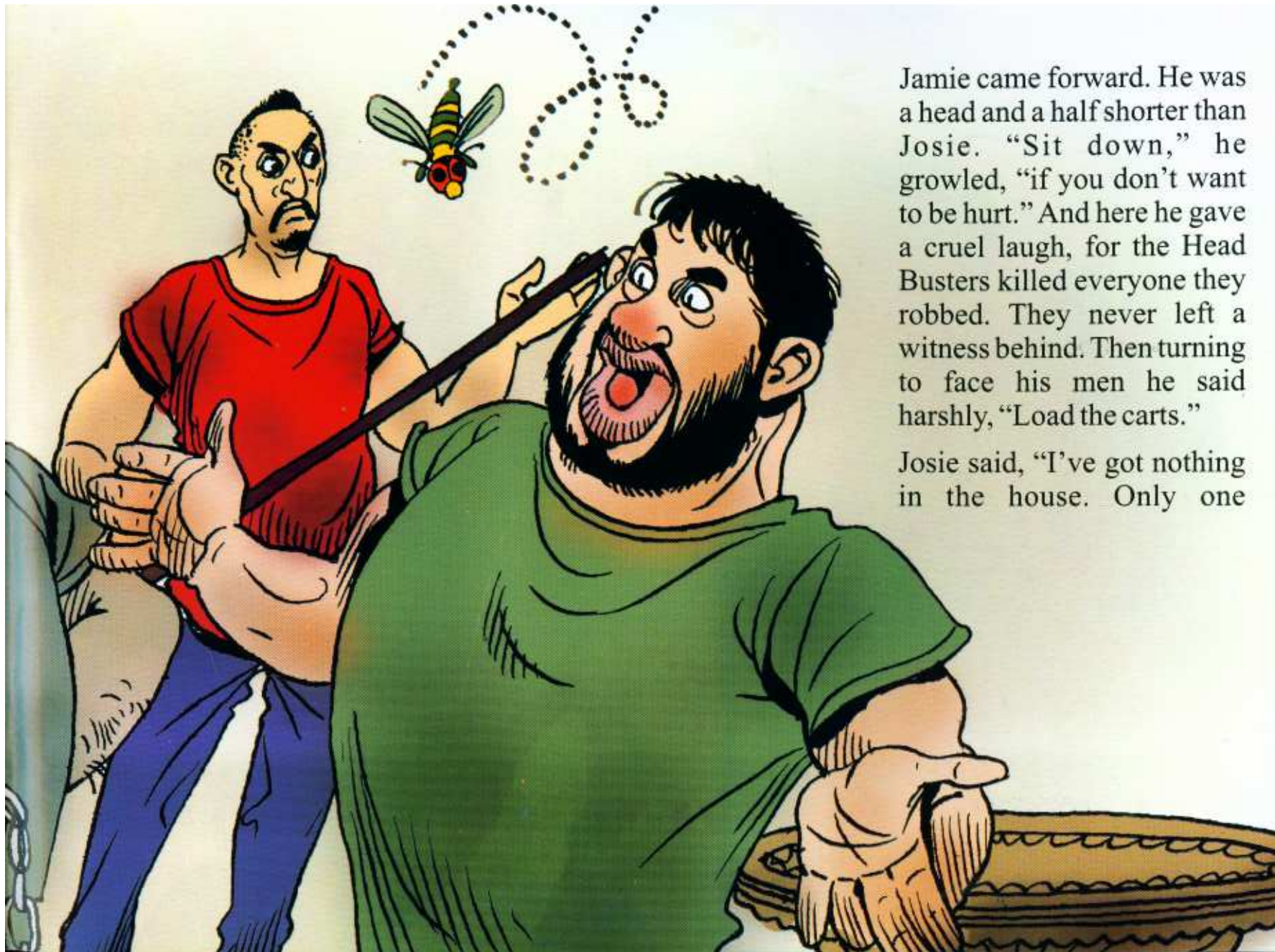


happily asleep too. And so they were sleeping when the sound of carts, and the grunt and cursing of men woke Blip. He peeped out of Josie's beard, and saw at once that all was not right. These men disturbed him. But Josie slept on. He was tired . . . so Blip hopped onto his moustache and flapped his wings under his nose, tickling him. Blip then quickly flew off before Josie could slap him thinking him to be a fly.



Josie woke up to see so many men about. He smiled at them. When he saw the iron rods and knives his smile vanished. Their appearance too was not reassuring and they had such wicked looking faces. Who could they be?



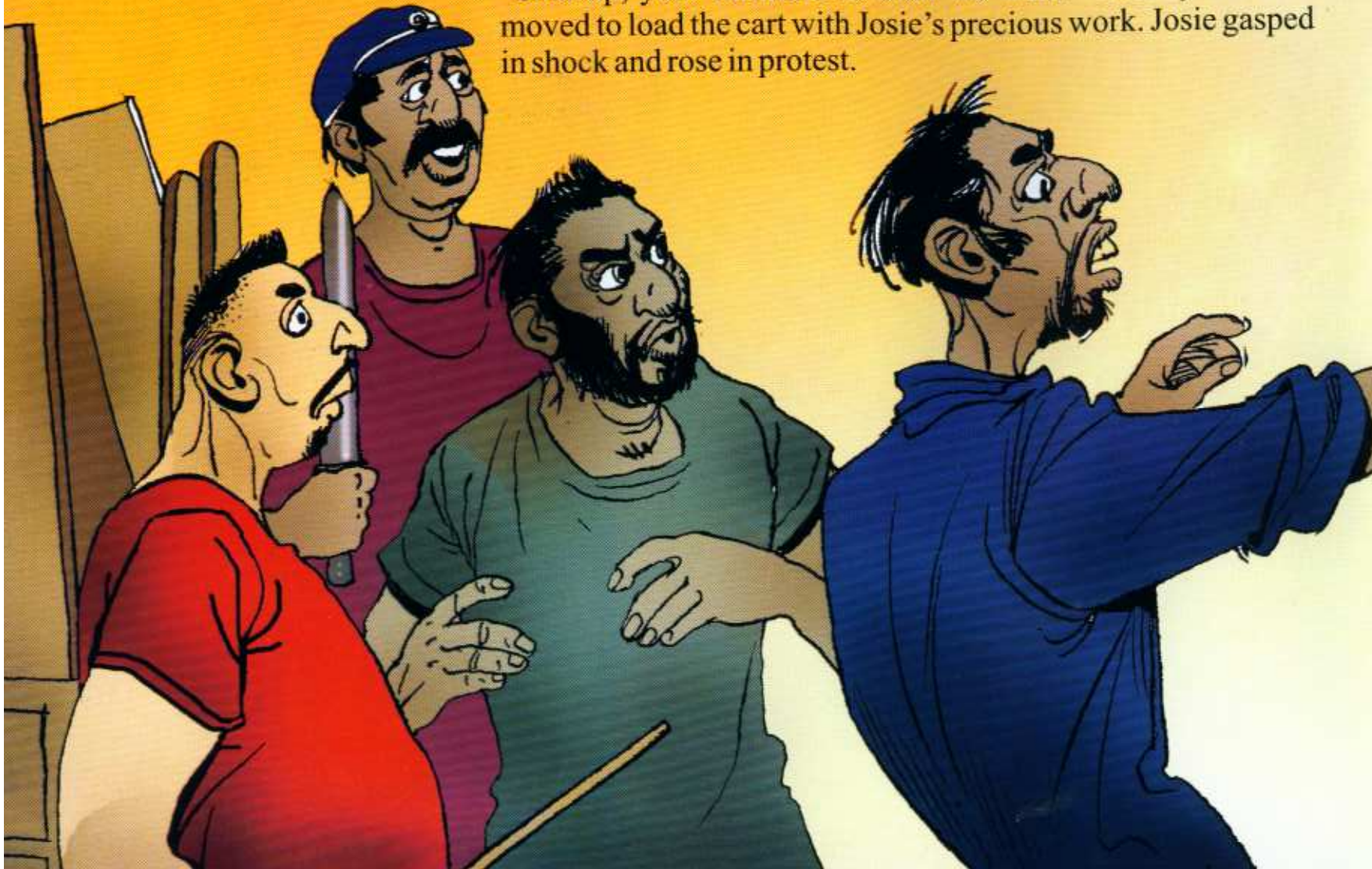


Jamie came forward. He was a head and a half shorter than Josie. "Sit down," he growled, "if you don't want to be hurt." And here he gave a cruel laugh, for the Head Busters killed everyone they robbed. They never left a witness behind. Then turning to face his men he said harshly, "Load the carts."

Josie said, "I've got nothing in the house. Only one

refrigerator and one T.V. No money either, only my furniture.”

“Shut up, your furniture is what we want.” Swiftly his men moved to load the cart with Josie’s precious work. Josie gasped in shock and rose in protest.



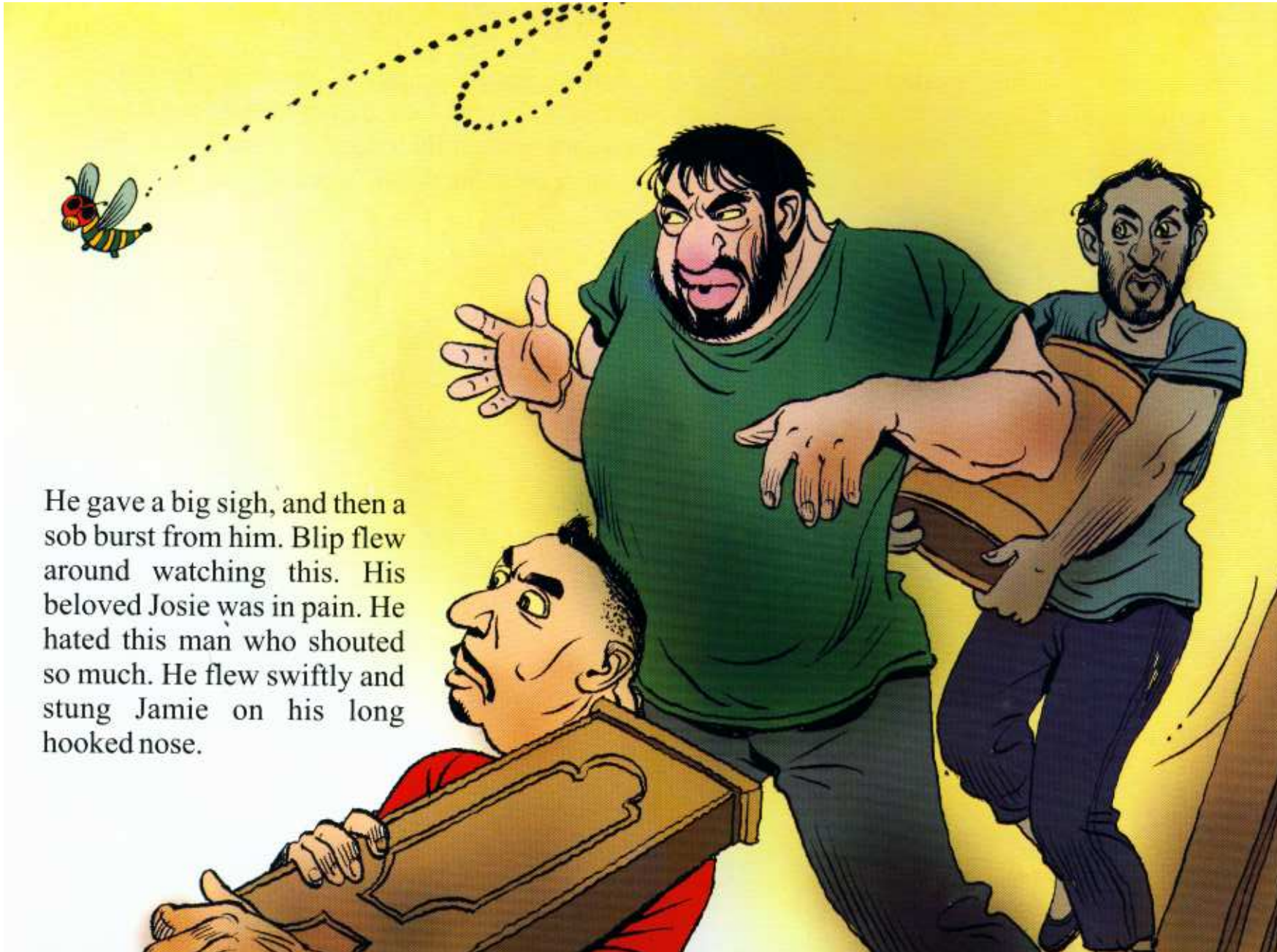


Jamie took out his dagger, "You big, useless hulk, sit down," he roared. "And I won't say it again. Go into your bunker and get all the bread, cheese, dals and atta you have. Make a bundle and keep it out here."

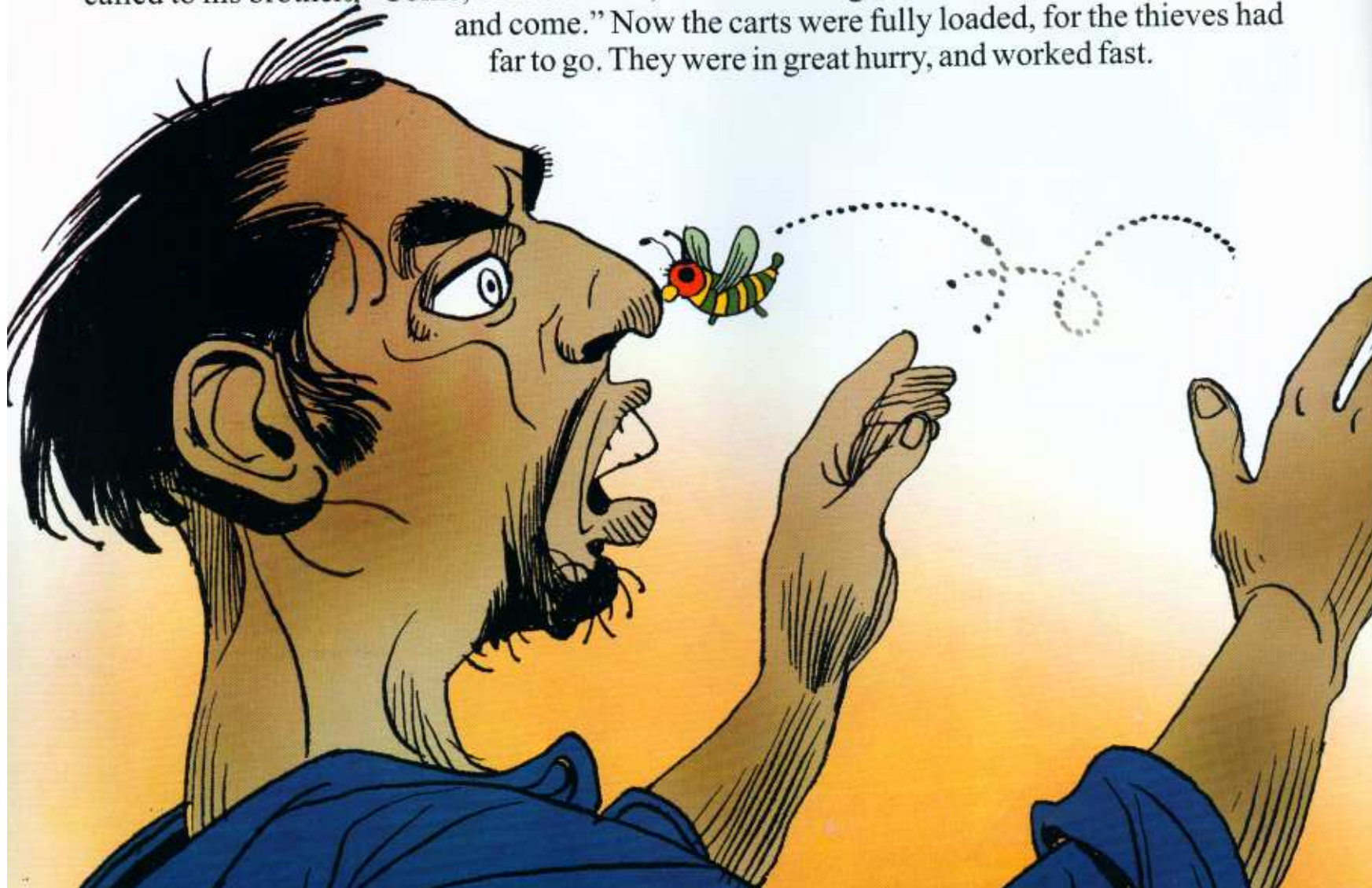
Josie was shattered as he saw his
precious furniture being taken away.



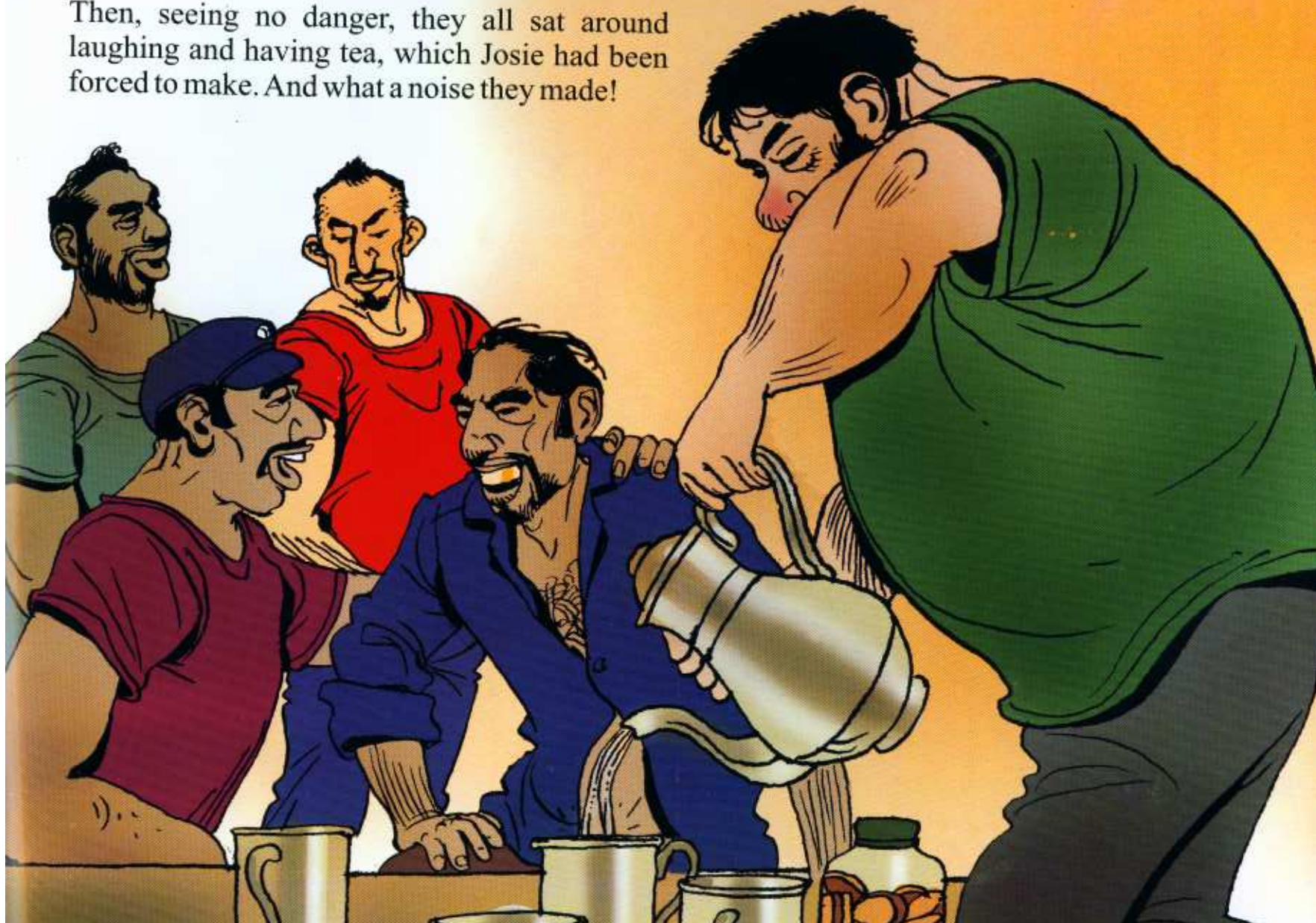
He gave a big sigh, and then a sob burst from him. Blip flew around watching this. His beloved Josie was in pain. He hated this man who shouted so much. He flew swiftly and stung Jamie on his long hooked nose.



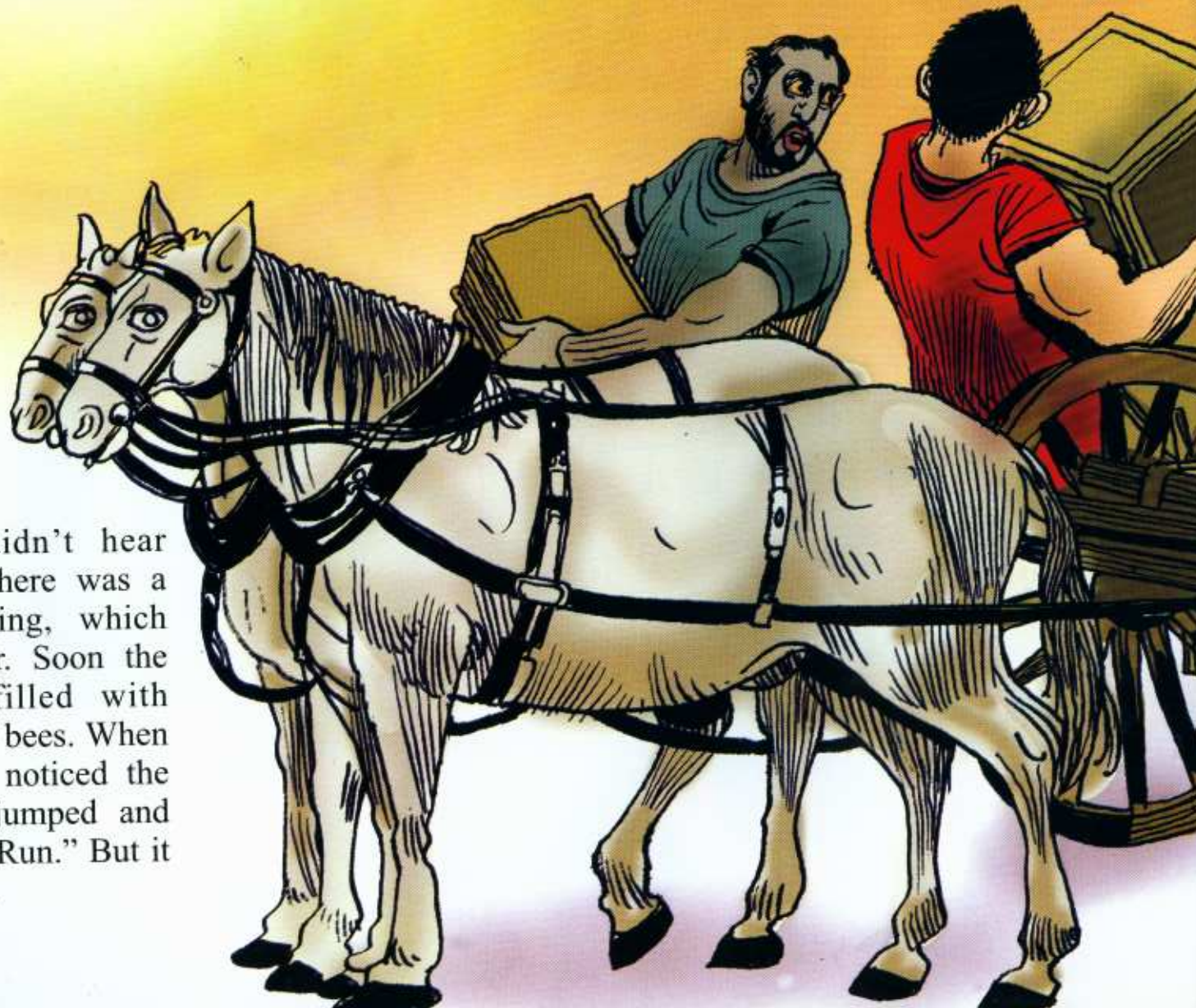
"AOWWW-EEE," yelled the man, holding his nose and hopping on one leg. Then Blip called to his brothers, "Come, come at once, Josie is in danger. Leave everything for a while and come." Now the carts were fully loaded, for the thieves had far to go. They were in great hurry, and worked fast.

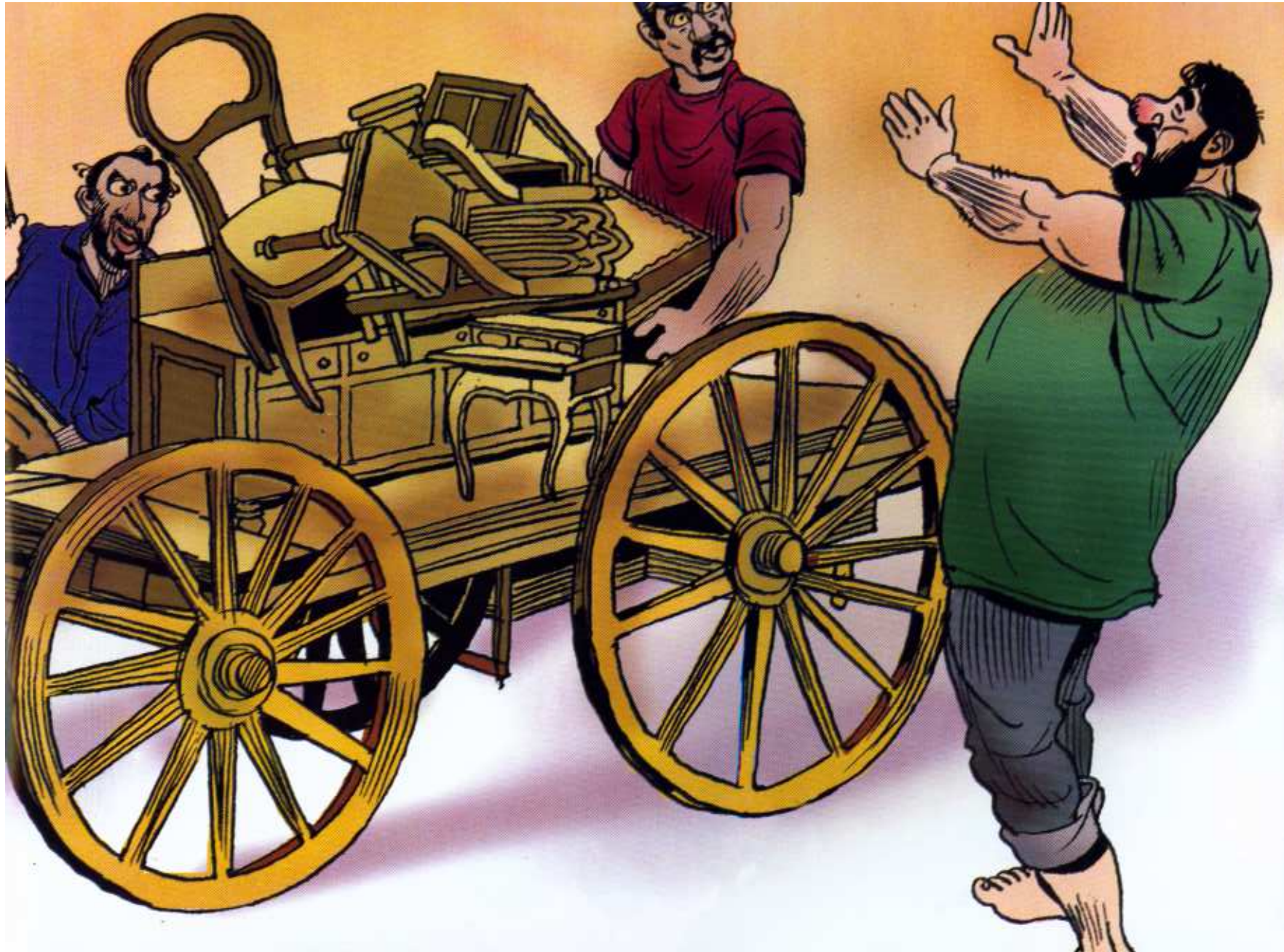


Then, seeing no danger, they all sat around laughing and having tea, which Josie had been forced to make. And what a noise they made!



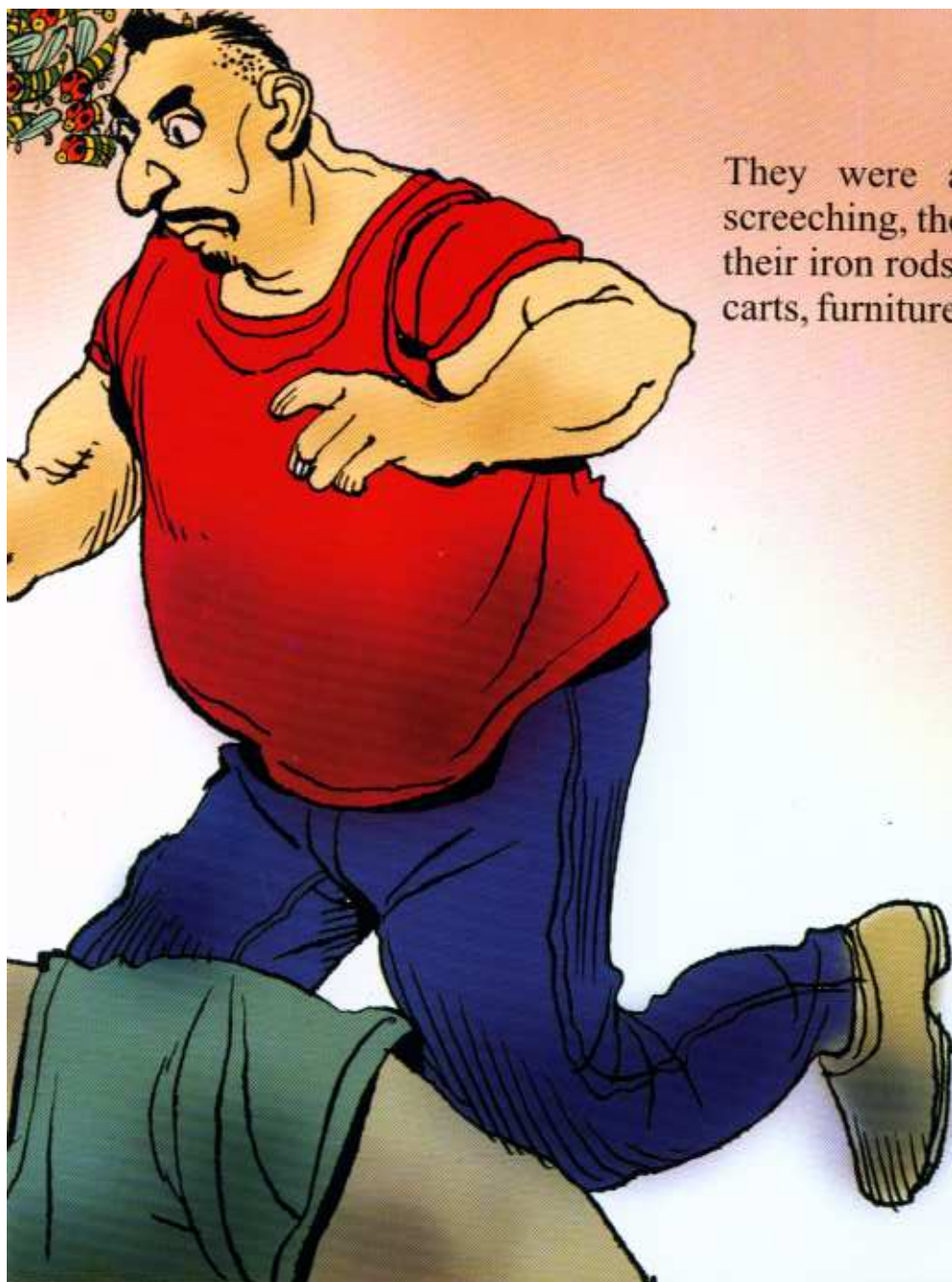
So they didn't hear anything. There was a low humming, which grew louder. Soon the sky was filled with hundreds of bees. When the thieves noticed the bees they jumped and screamed, "Run." But it was too late.



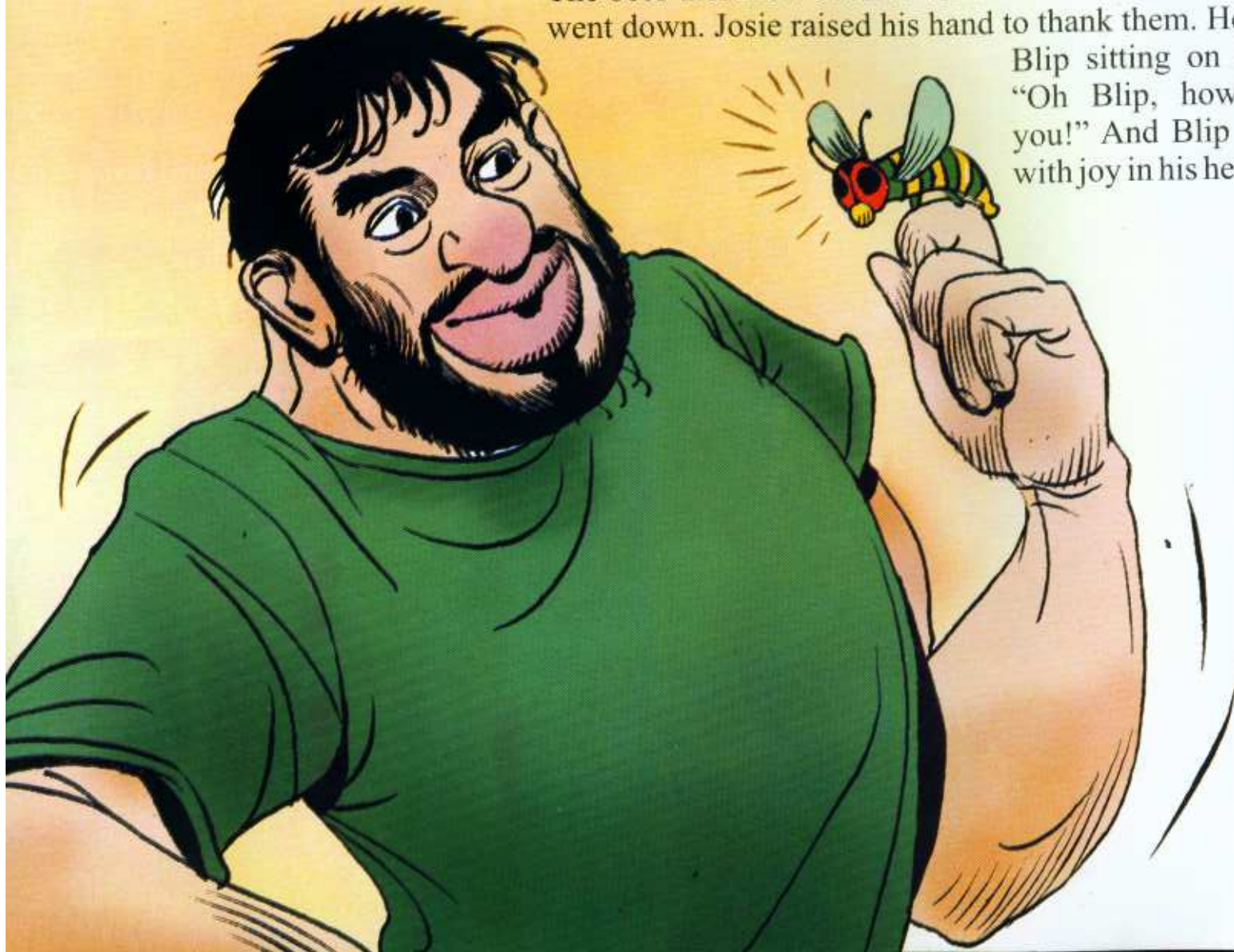




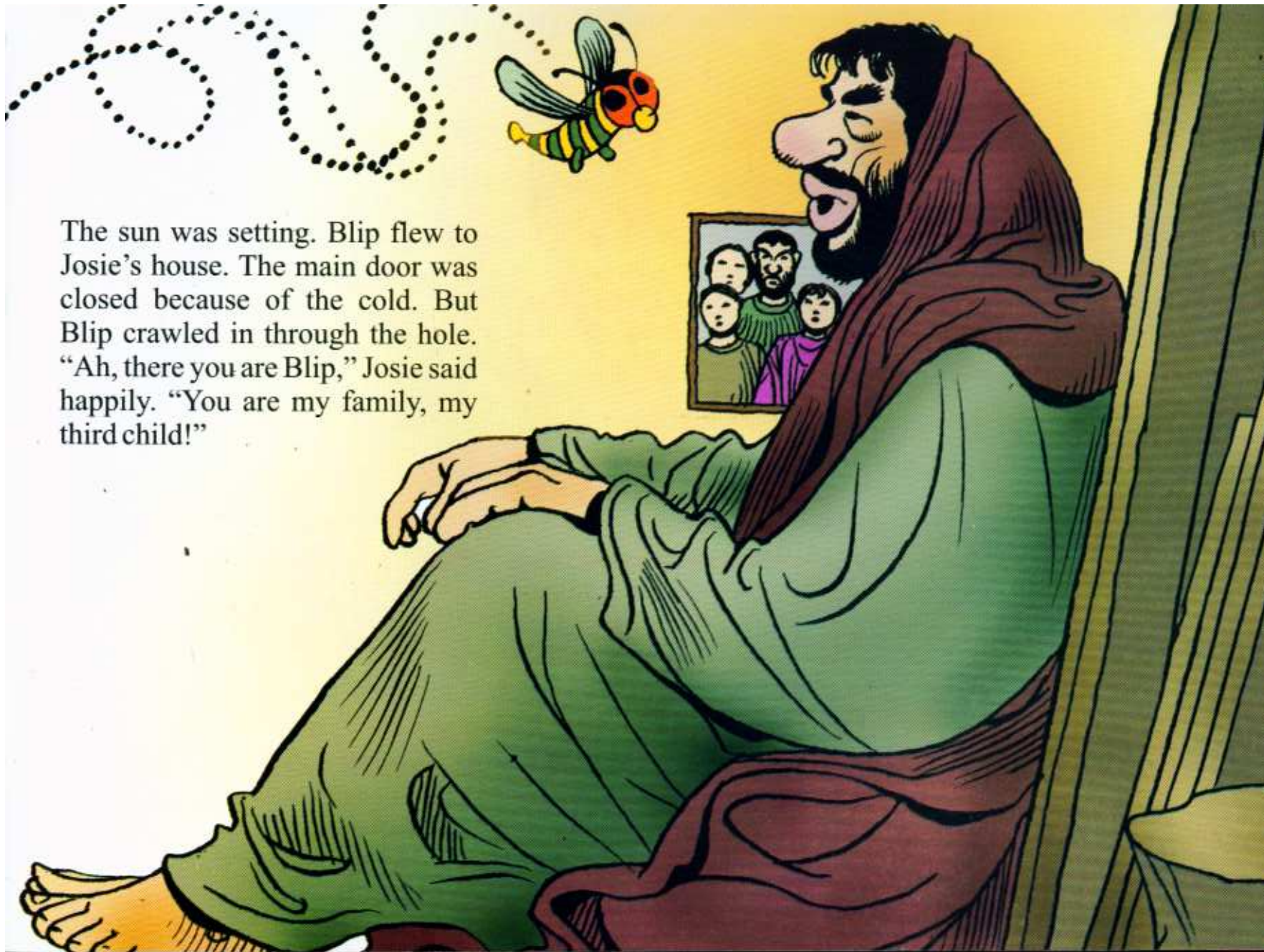
They were attacked from all sides. Cursing and screeching, the Head Busters ran into the forest dropping their iron rods and swords behind. Leaving their loaded carts, furniture and horses too.



The bees then flew back to finish their work before the sun went down. Josie raised his hand to thank them. He noticed Blip sitting on his arm, "Oh Blip, how I love you!" And Blip flew off with joy in his heart.



The sun was setting. Blip flew to Josie's house. The main door was closed because of the cold. But Blip crawled in through the hole. "Ah, there you are Blip," Josie said happily. "You are my family, my third child!"





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